Forensic Fingerprinting

Target grade level(s): 1st-5th grade

Investigate fingerprints by examining your own! A fingerprint is an impression left by the friction ridges of the human finger. Human fingerprints are detailed, nearly unique, difficult to alter, and durable over the life of an individual, making them suitable as long-term markers of human identity. Fingerprint analysis, in use since the early 20th century, has led to many crimes being solved. The recovery of fingerprints from a crime scene is an important method of forensic science.

**Supplies**
- One (1) piece of paper
- One (1) pencil
- One (1) roll of clear tape
- One (1) fingerprint reference sheet

**Challenge**

1. With the pencil, color in a 1 inch x 1 inch box (color very dark)
2. Rub the pad of your finger on the pencil mark box until covered in pencil lead
3. Place a piece of tape over your darkened finger pad
4. Remove tape from finger pad and place/stick tape to paper
5. Look at fingerprint reference sheet to investigate your fingerprints

**Guiding Questions:**

1. How are your fingerprints the same? How are they different?
2. What shape are they? What size?
3. Do they make a pattern? What does it look like?
4. What type of fingerprints do you have?
5. Do all of your fingers bear the same prints?
6. Do we leave fingerprints everywhere we go?
Fingerprinting Reference Sheet:

- **Loop**
- **Pocket Loop**
- **Double Loop**
- **Arch**
- **High Arch**
- **Whorl**